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Chetham College

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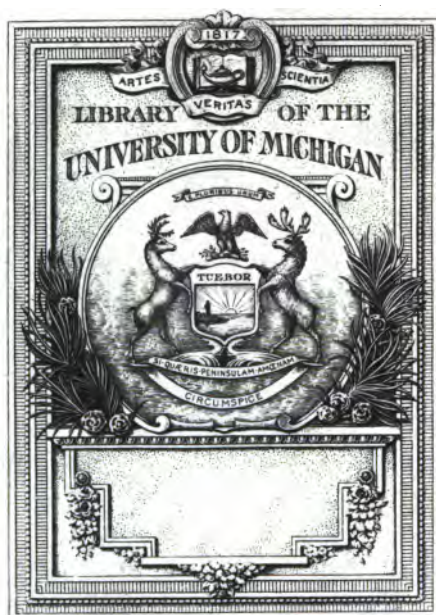
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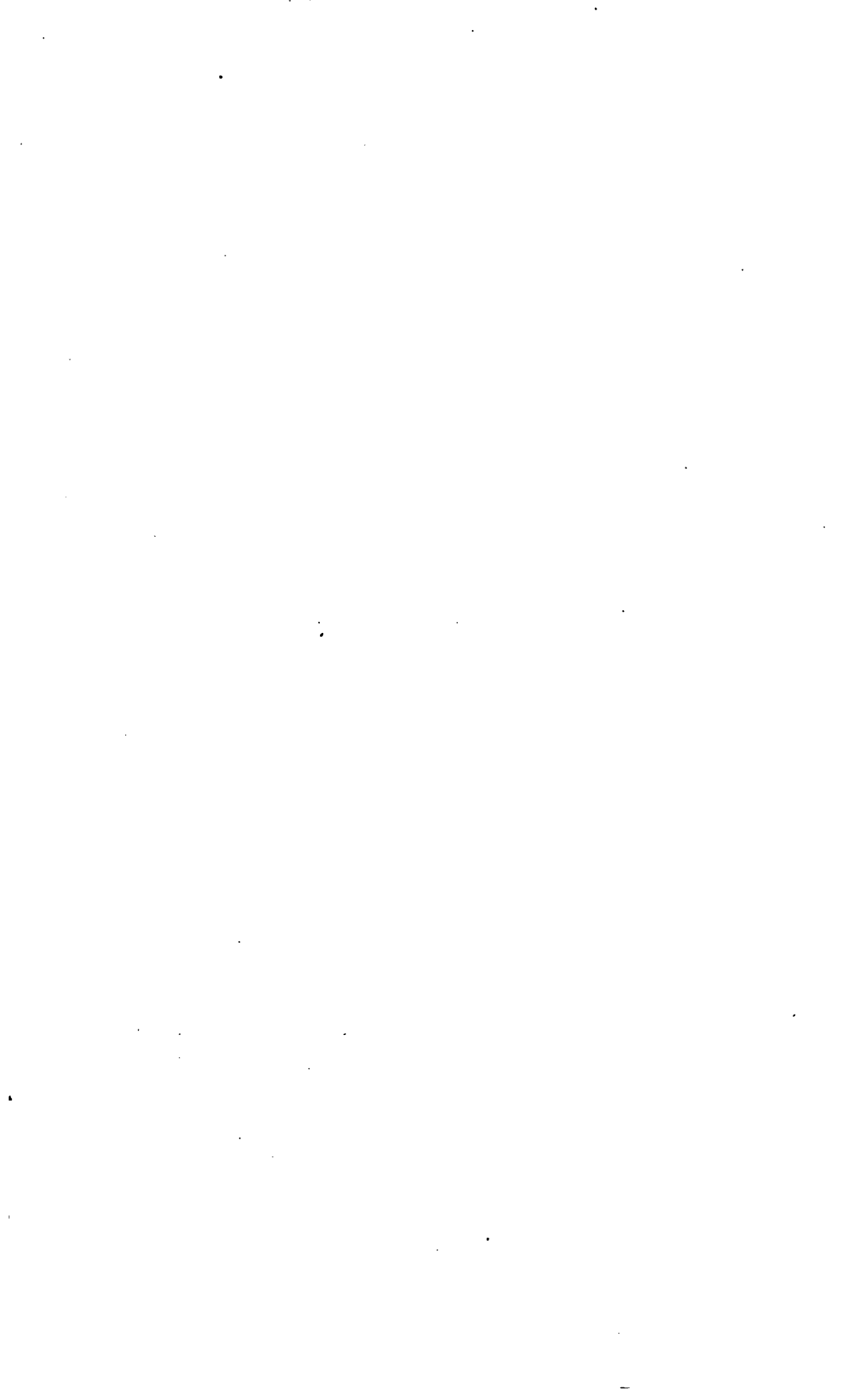
Written by Robert Blatchford, with introduction by
Rev. George Hodges, D.D., and specially drawn
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Humphrey Chetham

Obit 1653

From the oil painting in the warden's room, Chetham College

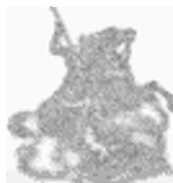
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FIRST BODLEIAN BOOKLET

Chetham College

[ENGLAND]

"The oldest free library in the world"

WRITTEN BY ROBERT BLATCHFORD,
WITH INTRODUCTION BY REV. GEORGE HODGES, D.D.
AND SPECIALLY DRAWN ILLUSTRATIONS AND
INITIALS BY WILLIAM PALMER



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IN MEMORY OF

Ernest Howard Crosby

Univ. of N. Y. 1876; Columbia Coll. Law School 1878

1856-1907

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Way of Introduction

Here opens a little gate out of a noisy street into a green cloister, so that we pass from the sight of reeking chimneys and the company of crowding mill-hands into a place where sweet peace prevails, where there is decent leisure, where there are old portraits of gentlemen, and books written on vellum, and good people who have time to read them. Here in Manchester—of all impossible places!—the past and the present lie thus in instructive contrast.

Mr. Blatchford has no love for Henry VIII, who though he did not himself eject the gentle brethren of this cloister began the bad business and must bear the blame of it. He has a store of hard, round adjectives with which he pelts Henry wherever he meets him,— who thus rudely shut the door in the face of the past and held out a beckoning hand to the present; to this selfish, commercial present, intent, like Henry, on getting all that can be got, regardless

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Gbetbam College

of old sanctities, of dignity, of beauty, of religion, of the best of life. Mr. Blatchford has no love for this present, either; especially as it is manifested in Manchester, and such like enterprising places. To him it means hurry and worry, and cheapness and vulgarity, and things made by machinery, and all manner of bad taste and bad behaviour.

I hope that the past was as good as he thinks it was, and that the parsons and people of the old times were as pleasant as they are picturesque. I am afraid that they were not. It seems to me that it must have been mighty cold for the brethren who had but distant "access to the fire," and that the cold must have entered into their souls. I am inclined to think that it is warmer now on cold days, even in Manchester. But it is cold enough.

Anyhow, here is a charming picture of a remote time, done with sympathy, full of fine feeling, good to look upon, and pleasant and profitable to remember.

GEORGE HODGES.

**THE DEANERY,
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS.**

William Palmer's Illustrations and Initials

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Chetham College



Humphrey Chetham's Life Dream, from the Fresco of Ford Madox Brown.

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town ;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And old Mancunium, small and white and clean,
And Irwell bordered by its gardens green.

(With apologies to William Morris.)



AIL, Humphrey Chet-
ham, hail ! May
thy kind soul find music
and fair flowers in the far
Elysian fields. Thou wert
a good fellow, Humphrey,
and hast kept sweet for us
and undefiled, one quiet

nook of the old, calm world. To thee we owe
the sole remnant of grace and dignity now left
in this great vulgar city, in this blatant pursy age.

Chetham College

Oh, grand old Chetham College, refuge of meditative minds, haunt of the little band of poets and thinkers who survive in Modern Athens like the few grayling lingering in a stream befouled, or the last frail flowers clinging to the fringes of a thronged highway.

Oh, the still, grey, ancient pile, mellowed and made venerable by the suns and storms of many centuries; shrine of old sainted heroisms, altar of burnt-out faiths, monument of dead glories and forgiven shams, noble old harbour of romance in the midst of gross materialism, repository of a thousand pensive sweet records of love and hatred and labour and rest, sanctuary of the student and the dreamer, *terra incognita* of cheap trippers, storehouse of beauty and wisdom, which the money-changers do not prize — what an heirloom, what a dower, what a treasure have we here, and for this do we give good Humphrey Chetham thanks. May his soul find ease and kind communion with congenial spirits in the great Otherwhere beyond the blue sky-mystery and its solemn stars.

It is small wonder that invading armies of cheap trippers, pouring into Manchester from Victoria Station, pass by Chetham College una-

Chetham College

wares. The place is hidden. Thousands of Manchester people have never seen nor heard of it. A modern hotel conceals it on the Irwell side, a modern grammar-school upon the opposite side, a jealous wall upon the side which fronts the Cathedral. The entrance is insignificant and uninviting. Through a small doorway in the common dead wall, right opposite the cab-rank you get a glimpse of a dull, bare parade, and beyond it a long, low building, suggesting almshouses, if nothing worse. You pass by. You see no invitation. You miss the noblest sight in Modern Athens.

The charm and interest of Chetham College are enhanced by the surroundings. It would be hard to find such another jewel in such another frowsy casket.

Conway Castle is quite at home in its green nest above the river; Haddon Hall appears as natural amongst its lofty trees and noble meadows as a gem amongst rare chasings; Bolton Abbey sleeps peacefully in Bolton Woods; Skipton Towers have a quaint old street and a solemn graveyard at their feet; Hampton Court is parted from the modern world by broad acres of smiling gardens; the Monastery at Whitby rears its grey

Chetham College

frontage to the everlasting sea; but Chetham College hides its still heart and hoards the priceless treasures of its memories amid the din and reek of busy Manchester's most busy quarters.

The black Irk, hiding its shame, sneaks by beneath its walls; the black Irwell, exposing its infamy, crawls past its front; the much restored Cathedral, in its ugly flagged square, the Exchange Station, the Victoria Station, the big unhandsome Grammar School, the noisy main street — these are its boundaries.

All around, from the ill-favoured, grimy walls, the blatant advertisement signs shriek out their trashy wares. The air is thick with steam and smoke, and redolent of dye-water, of sulphur, of rancid odours from the Yankee cheese and bacon stores adjacent. The sea of modern civilisation, vulgar, sordid, irreverent, full of wolfish greediness and feverish haste, beats right up to the gates of the quiet sanctuary. Its hot spray has blown within and burnt up every blade of grass, so that the playground is a dirty wilderness. Modern enterprise and energy jostle the old college on every side. The new hotel treads almost on its toes, planting its rude back against the stately front of Chetham's, and hiding most completely all its venerable beauty.



Chetham College

But still Chetham College stands where it did, and that is a thing to marvel over and be grateful for. It is a miracle of miracles that it has not ere now been "transferred," "restored," and "utilised" out of all value or recognition.

It is a wonderful old place. As you enter at the little gateway you step out of the new world into the old. The clatter of the traffic dies away; you forget the enterprising cheese factor, and the improved train-service to Oldham and Stalybridge, you forget the Belle Vue band contest, and the address of Mr. Balfour to his constituents, you "forget the snorting steam and piston stroke," and your spirit is hushed and soothed, as when you enter the dim, cool aisles of some fine cathedral, or the green ways of a leafy forest. In two paces you have come into another country and another age.

So we found it, Palmer and I, when on Monday last we sought seclusion from the noisy manifestations of great Manchester's great commerce. At one stride we severed ourselves from the turmoil and the cares, the irritations and the littlenesses of this glorious century of "dividents" and machinery and slums and profits, and became as Christians and as human beings.

Chetbam College

"Peace," said the artist, and raised his hat.
"Amen," quoth I, and raised mine.



The old well in the Quadrangle

At the angle of the building we saw a Chetbam boy busily at it patching the frayed ground with cement and cobbles. We called him over

Cbetbam College

and conversed with him.

He was a nice little fellow with a pleasant, rosy face, a friendly smile, and a frank blue eye, and liked us well.

“Who taught you the gentle art of a pavior?”

“We teach ourselves, sir.”

“How so, without instruction?”

“We learn by trying, sir. We do our best.”

“The best is good. What do you learn in the school?”

“Oh, many things, sir; French, and grammar, and shorthand, and geography, and —”

“A sound ‘commercial education.’ H’m! Where do you come from?”

“Bolton, sir.”

“Are you an orphan?”

“I have a mother, sir; father is dead.”

“So you like the place? Are you happy?”

“Oh, yes sir; but I go out soon. I shall be fourteen.”

“And where will you go, my son?”

“To Bolton, sir, I suppose.”

“It is well. Good luck attend you.”

And so we leave the little fellow, who goes back smiling to his road mending. A queer world. The great busy tide of commerce, which beats up

Chetham College

to the walls of this quiet haven, will lap him up and carry him away. He has been here eight years. I wonder will he be as happy anywhere again; whither the fierce tide will drift him; how it will fare with him: whether he will have a smile as trustful and a glance as frank in the years to come when "the cattle and swine have chewed and trampled all the green off him?" I wonder.

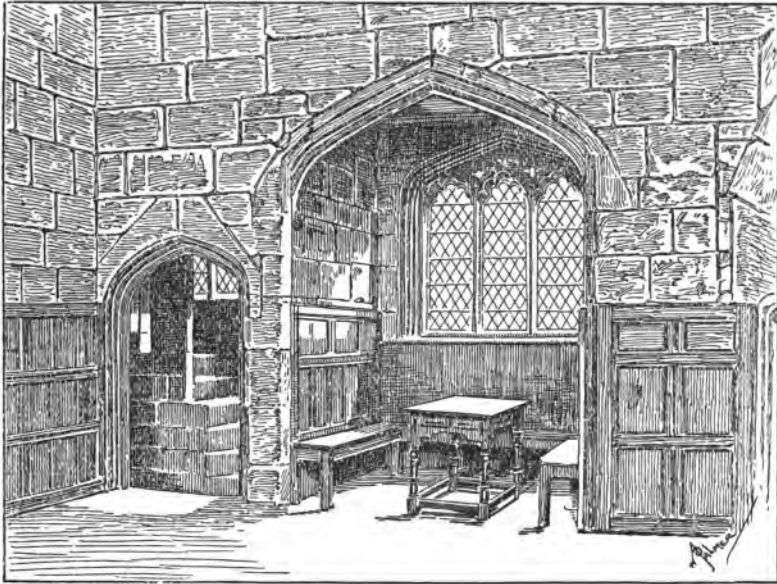
I mind me of a time when—but now—alas!

Chetham College stands on the site of the old baronial hall of the Gresleys. In the distant feudal times the bold, bad baron would set his serfs to work to make a clearing in the forest, and therein would build his castle. Then round the castle would spring up a village, the homes of peasants and retainers, under protection of the lord.

Thus was it with the ancient stronghold of the Gresleys; so that this half-forgotten place is actually the seed from which sprang Manchester. The tree is a grimy one, and harbours strange wild-fowl in its branches. The seed, alas, is now of little practical account—quite insignificant and unimportant as compared with the Exchange and the new Town Hall. But—!

Cbetbam College

This old baronial hall was a handsome building, doubtless, and stood on a pleasant site. Grounded on a rocky eminence, forty feet above the level, at the fork of the Irwell and the Irk, with a fair prospect over the marshy lands to the west and the grand green woods all round.



Ladies' Bay in the Great Hall with portion of stairs and doorway leading to the Minor Hall

The silvery Irk ran at its foot, a pretty stream. There were trout and grayling in its waters and wan-leaved willow and graceful alders on its grassy banks. Over against the Irwell there

Chetham College

were, I am sure, some stately elms on which the rooks and the thrushes sang.

Hanging Ditch was then a defensive moat, spanned by a swinging bridge. Wild ducks and water hens paddled in the pools of Withy Grove, and dappled kine cropped the dark fine grass in the meadows where now stands the station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

You may see the river gate yet, and the fish pond, and the charter, granted centuries later, giving to the Chetham boys *liberty to fish in the Irwell*.

So stood the grand old fortress in the grand old days. How it stands now I have already told you.

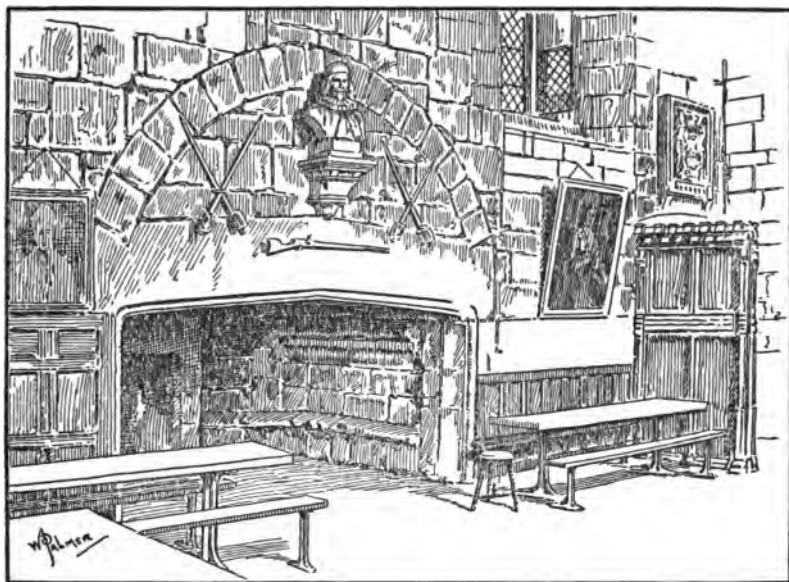
The present college was founded and built by John De la Warre, the soldier-priest, descendant of the Gresleys.

De la Warre succeeded to the manorial rights in 1398. In 1421 or thereabouts, the rectory (now the Cathedral) was made into a collegiate church. Between 1421 and 1426, or towards the end of Henry Fifth's reign (Falstaff's Prince Hal) the present college was founded.

It was founded for the use and benefit of the ecclesiastics of the collegiate church, and was

Cbetbam College

the residence of the warden, eight fellows, and six choristers of the church. The six fellows comprised two parish priests, two canons, and four deacons ; the first warden being Jno. Huntington, Rector of Ashton.



Fireplace in the old hall

On the whole, the warden and his fellows must have had a good time of it.

Good times, for the Puritans had cast no chilly shadow on religion then, and prior and priests were wise and merry men, who could curse as

Chetham College

well as pray in Latin, were as much at home in chain mail as in gowns of frieze; could handle sword and quarter staff as well as rosary; could deal a lusty blow, and eat a lusty meal, and sing a lusty song, and would roast a heretic, or shrive you a dying soldier, or heal an aching heart, or wrestle with a fearsome plague with equal faithfulness. As witness jovial Bishop Still, of Bath and Wells, and his play of Gammer Gurton's Needle.

It was not long though before the old religion fell under the ban of the thievish, knavish, dissolute, swinish Henry, miscalled "Bluff" King Hal; and the monasteries and churches were rifled, the libraries scattered, the lands divided amongst the bandits and toadies of the bawdy court, and the poor monks and kindly fat friars and priors were hunted like hares by the brutish soldiery, and plucked like pigeons by the light-fingered nobility of merry England — ancestors of the washed-out peers who now prate about "confiscation" and the "dishonesty" of restoring the soil to the people.

Strange to say, Chetham College appears to have escaped this general rapine and brigandage during Henry's reign; but in the first year of

Chetbam College

the Sixth Edward the oversight was atoned for. The college was "dissolved," and the buildings and land passed in some mysterious fashion into the hands of the Stanleys.

That was about 1547. The Stanleys held the place for a century or more, and it became the residence of the Earls of Derby.

But when the troubles broke out between the sainted Charles Rex and the Parliament the then Earl took up the Royal cause, and served it not wisely but too well.

I'm not going at this time of day to fret old wounds. Women and children *were* cut to pieces at Bolton by the Earl of Derby's troops; the Earl of Derby *was* wounded and taken prisoner at the battle of Worcester; he *did* die on the scaffold in 1651, at Bolton, the scene of his former exploits, and his estates *were* "forfeit" to the Commonwealth — the collegiate buildings of Manchester amongst them.

Evil times now came to the brave old place. We read of its falling into disrepair; of its being used as a magazine for the storage of arms and ammunition; of horses being stabled in the buildings, and soldiers quartered in the dormitories and kitchens; nay, as if these degradations

Chetham College

should not suffice, the home of scholarship and piety became — a prison.

A prison! There have been sad hearts here as well as merry ones, and the grey old stones have swallowed sighs as well as laughter. Those were bitter days, my masters, bloody and bitter days.

In such case was our collegiate hall — when the benevolent Humphrey Chetham conceived the design of turning it to useful purposes.

Negotiations were opened by good Humphrey with the Parliamentary committee; but nothing came of them; and it was not until after his death that the trustees of his will obtained the place by purchase from Charlotte de la Tremonaille, the widow of the ill-fated Earl of Derby, beheaded at Bolton as before said.

And so the old baronial hall and collegiate residence became Chetham College by charter of the pious King Charles II, of glorious memory, in the year of Grace 1665. Ta-ra-ra, etc.

Chetham's generous and happy bequest brought him well-earned commendation. Fuller, in his *History of the Worthies of England*, says: —

“God send us more such men, that we may

Chetham College

dazzle the eyes of the Papists with the light of Protestant works."

Poor old Fuller. Had not Cromwell "dazzled the Papist eyes" enough in Ireland with the flashes of Protestant cannon? Truly, religious intolerance and bigotry are fearfully and wonderfully made.

In the Library at Chetham College are some old MS. books of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, which do most assuredly dazzle our eyes with the light of Catholic works and that to some tune.

Here we have illuminated manuscripts on vellum, centuries old. The colours still fresh and pure, the gold still clean and lustrous. Latin testaments and vulgates, written in the old black letter, the text perfect in its uniformity and precision, the drawings, initials and embellishments artistic and tender; their simple grace, their practised freedom, chaste design, and perfect frankness above praise.

Marvellous and admirable are the pious faithfulness and loving pains of this old work. It was done "as to the Lord"; done in an age when art was loved for its own sake, and not sold for pelf, done when thoroughness and purity

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were studied and revered, and when time and labour were grudged of none.

But I do not think these books were written and decorated by the wardens and the fellows. No. I see here the trained skill and calm humility of the poorer priests and friars. Old wines never shook their nerves, nor did gluttony of rich viands blur the brains of the scribes who wrought this work. In them I see the soul and patience of certain "Chantry Priests" named in the ancient chronicles.

These men wore "coarse frieze cassocks, leathern girdles, thick clogs, and felt hats, or *none*." These men had the "Right to sit at dinner with the fellows of the college, *and to have access to the fire*." The poor old hardused drudges. Cannot you see a picture here? A picture of the rubicund, obese warden and his fleshy fellows monopolising the grateful heat of the flaring logs in the ingle, and the plain-clad deferential priests hovering round, rubbing humble hands, and peering at the blaze.

The interior of Chetham College is as elegant and stately as its associations are interesting and romantic. You pass first of all through the great dimly lighted library, where are 60,000 valuable

Cbetbam College

books. You feel here that subtle odour of mellow sheets and bindings so grateful to the student; and that still more subtle odour of old scholarship, old chivalry, old Latin, and old lore—an odour spiritual, evanescent, but not less real.

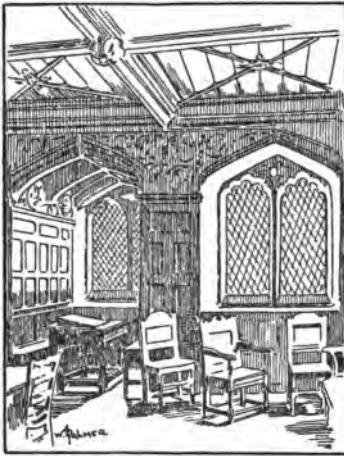
Leaving the library, you go through the great hall—a place similar in character to the hall at Haddon; with a lofty roof, a gigantic ingle nook, a raised table, and minstrels' gallery. Thence to the fine old kitchen, with its fine old fireplace, over which hang some fine old knives, and a spit large enough to hold an ox. There have been brave cookerries and carousals here in the by-gone times. One looks at the great range and smacks one's lips. Oh, ho! the visions of reeking venison, of huge game pasties, and monstrous barons of beef. Oh, ho! the good fat ale, the savoury sausage, and the oven cakes of tempting odour.

There is a spy hole near the roof in the old kitchen, whence in the brave days of old the Lord was wont to keep an eye upon his henchmen, for the menials slept here, say the old chronicles—"upon the floor."

We walk through the chill grey Gothic cloisters (not without feeling that some heavy-jowled,

Cbetbam College

thick-waisted, flat-footed monk may possibly be behind us); we see the time-scarred quadrangle, and the foot-worn steps and terraces and we come to the feofees' room — a handsome apartment, with a massive fifteenth century roof and massive seventeenth century furniture — wherein



The Audit or "Feofees" Room, with
fifteenth century oaken ceiling

we be sure have met some goodly companies of ladies fair, and gallants gay and grey-beards wise with years and proud with high distinction. We look at the quaint old chairs, and old grotesque oak carvings, on which the glamour of lang syne bestows an almost

human interest, and we turn away with a sigh for the dead generations of the brave and bonny who have withered and gone to dust like the fallen flowers of forgotten summers. Poor old warriors and councillors and minstrels and divines; poor old broken harps, and rusted swords, and

Cbetbam College

faded fineries; poor old songs that are sung,
tales that are told, lives lived, loves burnt out
and feuds forgotten. Vanity of vanities, saith



The Reading Room, formerly the Warden's Room

the preacher. Man cometh up as a flower, and
is cut down. His days are swifter than a weav-
er's shuttle.

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The grandest, fairest, finest room in the place is the old oak-panelled reading room. It is *noble*; no other adjective describes it.

At one end there is a splendid bay, and in it a splendid dark oak writing table. Sit you down there in that well-lit airy nook, before that ven-



Historic bay and Writing Table in reading room

erable desk, and think awhile. You *can* think there. Give me a quiet hour and I will raise you sheeted ghosts in shadowy battalions, and spin you tales of love and battle as the spider spins silk. You doubt it? A man must have less imagination than a money lender if he will not be come a poet *here*.

Good work has been done at this table, too. Many a good fellow has written here. De Quincey, possibly, for he was Manchester born, may have sat here. Harrison Ainsworth wrote many of his romances here. They show you one of his MSS. in the Library. It is excellent copy, written in a bold lucid

Chetham College

hand, with few erasures and interlineations. Ainsworth had a brisk and virile genius, and I think should have done more worthy work. Perhaps he took things too easily. Good work costs even good men dear.

Oh, it is a grand old place, and yet! It is difficult to realise *how* old it is. One must think awhile.

Remember now: This college was built about 1425, on the site of a Norman castle. When this old roof was framed there was no America! There was no Shakespeare! There was no Indian Empire! There was no Protestant religion! There was no cotton trade! There was no Empire of All the Russias! Do these things convey to you some notion as to how venerable our Chetham College is?

What are your feelings, my proud Mancunians, when I quote for you old Leland, who in 1538



Jacobean Staircase leading to cloister gallery

Chetham College

describes Manchester as "standing in Salfordshire"?

A quaint old scribe that Fuller, "The Irwell," says he, "The Irwell is not navigable in some places for vadyes and rokkes." As I sat there and read these lines, I half expected to find the old divine standing before me when I raised my eyes.

But instead of seeing Fuller, I saw the playground and the gate, and in the gate-way looking idly at the hall—a telegraph boy.

Yes, a telegraph boy, within a hundred paces of me, and close to my hand there hung a framed autograph letter of Sir Walter Raleigh's.

The experience was very curious, and made me wonder *which* century I was living in, and which life was the real one.

Doubtless Sir Walter has been here, and stern old Knoll, and classic Milton, and many, many more whom we would be fain enough to meet, could they but return.

As one sits here in this tranquil, cool retreat, it seems almost impossible to realise the storms and troubles through which it has passed. Yet Chetham College, as our rough glimpse and outline of its history prove, has known exciting times.

Cbetbam College

There would be great wagging of monkish double chins in the great hall, when the news came that Columbus had discovered a new world. There would be broad smiles of satisfaction over the destruction of the Lollards. The victory of Agincourt, the emeute of Master Jack Cade would find fat themes for gossip. The advent of Joan of Arc; the final tragedy of that brave life in the square of Rouen must have ruffled this dove-cote into agitation.

So during the Wars of the Roses, the shaven pates would waggle wisely, and the little town of Manchester outside the college walls be strangely stirred.

Then there was the bloody eve of St. Bartholomew. How did the fellows take that? Ruefully we hope. Though in those times the sword was ruthless and the martyr fires burnt briskly.

Turn into the old council chamber, strange whisperings have gone on there about black deeds, and wild intrigues. The Death of Warwick the King-maker, the antics of crookback Dick the Third, the terrible fate of Mistress Shore, the landing of the Irish and Germans under Lord Lincoln.

Much sly tattle also we can fancy, as to the elopement of Dorothy Vernon from Haddon Hall, or the weakness of Edward the Fourth for saucy Mistress Woodville, or the bewildering amatory gyrations of the licentious Eight Harry.

Great would be the consternation anent the heresy and violence of that fat and foul debauchee. How the poor monks would sigh and fret as the news dribbled in of monasteries plundered, priests slain, altars rifled.

And then, the death of the bully, a gleam of hope, a shadow of fear, and — exeunt the clerics of the Collegiate Church, and enter the Stanleys of the grasping hand.

High state and revelry, no doubt in Derby's time. As I sit here, the Chetham boys are chanting very sweetly in the dining hall below. I wonder now did the singers of those old days pipe up their quaint sweet melodies. Do you know the old English glees and madrigals of Henry the hog his reign? There are some of them which possess a strange inward sweetness and plaintive air. Have you heard "My Bonny Lass She Smileth?" They could sing in those days beautiful songs, depend upon it.

Later, when the troubles broke out 'twixt

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Crown and Parliament, there would be anxious and gloomy days in the hall of the Stanleys. You can fancy James, Earl of Derby, frowning at the news of Chalgrove Field or Naseby. You can picture to yourself the stern, sour face of the Puritan official God-in-his-mercy Thomson, or Patient-under-chastenings Brown, as he stalked through this handsome old place and took possession and inventory for the commonwealth after Earl James had lost his head.

On the 17th August, 1648, the day of the battle of Preston, Cromwell writes to the "Honourable Committee of Lancashire, sitting at Manchester," giving account of the victory and of the dispersal of the Royalist troops, and adds: "Therefore, in order to perfecting this work, we desire you to raise your county, and to improve your forces, to the total ruin of that enemy whichway soever they go; and if you shall accordingly do your part, doubt not of their total ruin. We thought fit to speed this to you, *to the end that you may not be troubled if they shall march towards you*, but improve your interest as aforesaid, that you may give glory to God for this unspeakable mercy."

Comment is needless. There, in those few lines, is a lurid light, burning torch-like from the

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darkness of dead years, to illuminate the history and vicissitudes of Chetham College.

My telegraph boy is peering through the gate. The college boys are playing cricket on the blasted heath. Why no grass, Oh! feofees, and why no flowers? Our artist sits placidly sketching the



Chetham boys, with entrance to the Pump Court
and Old Brew House

old bay. The smoke of modern commerce drifts across the square. I think of the general election; the London County Council; the Ship Canal. Ah!

How it cools the blood to sit musing in this quiet oldness. How it humbles one. There are



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